

# Could women be patriots in Revolutionary America?



Molly Pitcher at the Battle of Monmouth. June 1778. Copy of engraving by J. C. Armytage after Alonzo Chappel. ARC Identifier: 532935; The George Washington Bicentennial Commission, 1931 - 1932; Records of Commissions of the Legislative Branch, 1928 - 2006; Record Group 148; National Archives and Records Administration.

## Supporting Questions

1. What is patriotism?
2. How were women viewed by the larger society during this time period?
3. In what ways did women push back against their prescribed roles?
4. Why, and in what ways, did the role of women in America begin to change?

Grade 9-12 Revolutionary Women Inquiry

Could women be patriots in Revolutionary America?	
<b>Standards and Content</b>	<b>Essential Standard AH1.H.2:</b> Analyze key political, economic and social turning points in United States History using historical thinking.  Concepts: Turning Points, Historical Thinking, Cause and Effect
<b>Staging the Compelling Question</b>	Students examine a woodcarving ( <a href="#">Link</a> ) and painting ( <a href="#">Link</a> ) from the Revolutionary era and write down their observations about how the women in the pieces are portrayed. Then, we will discuss their observations.

Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3	Supporting Question 4
What is patriotism?	What rights and roles did women have during the colonial and revolutionary period?	In what ways did women push back against their prescribed roles?	Why, and in what ways, did the role of women in America begin to change?
<b>Formative Performance Task</b>	<b>Formative Performance Task</b>	<b>Formative Performance Task</b>	<b>Formative Performance Task</b>
First, establish and record your own definition of patriotism. Then, using the provided sources, craft a definition of patriotism that fits the colonial and revolutionary period of the United States.	Make a comparative diagram (T-chart, Venn Diagram, etc.) that shows the differences between the roles of men and women during this time period.	Examine your assigned source to learn about a woman who defied or questioned traditional gender roles. Be prepared to give a short, informal presentation on her story to the class.	Read and annotate the following articles. Be prepared to engage in a structured discussion regarding the changes to women’s roles during this time period.
<b>Featured Sources</b>	<b>Featured Sources</b>	<b>Featured Sources</b>	<b>Featured Sources</b>
<p><b>Source A:</b> Patriotism, Britannica (<a href="#">Link</a>)</p> <p><b>Source B:</b> Patriotism, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Introduction and Section 1.1 (<a href="#">Link</a>)</p> <p><b>Source C:</b> Fanning the Flames of Patriotism, Library of Congress (<a href="#">Link</a>)</p>	<p><b>Source A:</b> Testimonies, Mother Ann Lee (<a href="#">Link</a>)</p> <p><b>Source B:</b> Thoughts, Ester Edwards Burr (<a href="#">Link</a>)</p> <p><b>Source C:</b> Women and Children in Colonial America, National Geographic (<a href="#">Link</a>)</p> <p><b>Source D:</b> The Rights of Colonists (<a href="#">Link</a>)</p>	<p><b>Source A:</b> <i>Abigail Smith Adams</i>, National Women’s History Museum (<a href="#">Link</a>)</p> <p><b>Source B:</b> <i>Judith Sargent Murray</i>, National Women’s History Museum (<a href="#">Link</a>)</p> <p><b>Source C:</b> <i>Mercy Otis Warren</i>, National Women’s History Museum (<a href="#">Link</a>)</p> <p><b>Source D:</b> <i>Phillis Wheatley</i>, National Women’s History Museum (<a href="#">Link</a>)</p> <p><b>Source E:</b> <i>Mary Ludwig Hays</i>, National Women’s History Museum (<a href="#">Link</a>)</p>	<p><b>Source A:</b> Shannon Bauchett, <i>The Origins of Republican Womanhood</i>, pp. 109-120 (<a href="#">Link</a>)</p> <p><b>Source B:</b> Linda K. Kerber, <i>The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment-An American Perspective</i>, pp. 187-205 (<a href="#">Link</a>)</p>

<b>Summative Performance Task</b>	<b>ARGUMENT:</b> Think about what it means to be a patriot. Could women be patriots in Revolutionary and early America? Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that discusses what it means to be a patriot and whether women in Revolutionary and Early America fit this definition using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical sources, while acknowledging competing views
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## C3 TEACHERS

	<p><b>EXTENSION:</b> Think back through who we just discussed. Who is left out of these narratives, and why is their exclusion significant? Craft a two-minute, elevator-pitch style presentation on one group of people who were left out of our discussion and why their exclusion is significant.</p>
<p><b>Taking Informed Action</b></p>	<p><b>UNDERSTAND</b> Explore these resources about women in World War II.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>It's Your War, Too: Women in WWII</i>, The National WWII Museum. (<a href="#">Link</a>)</li> <li>- <i>History at a Glance: Women in World War III</i>. The National WWII Museum. (<a href="#">Link</a>)</li> <li>- <i>Women in WWII</i>. National American History Museum. (<a href="#">Link</a>)</li> </ul> <p><b>ASSESS</b> Determine how the roles of women in these two periods were different. In what ways could the actions of the colonial women have impacted the roles of women during WWII?</p> <p><b>ACT</b> Create a WWII-style propaganda poster to activate colonial women for the Revolutionary War.</p>

*\*Featured sources are suggested and links are provided. It may be that these links are broken and we apologize in advance for the inconvenience.*

**Additional Resources or Internet Sites:**

- Want to learn more about women during this time period? A great place to start is Linda K. Kerber's Women of the Republic.
- Want to learn more about revolutionary American women? The National Women's History Museum has a fantastic collection of short biographies.

## Overview

### Inquiry Description

This inquiry is designed to lead high-school students through an investigation of the roles and rights of women during the colonial and Revolutionary eras of United States history. By investigating the compelling question, “Could women be patriots during the Revolutionary War?” students consider the ways in which patriotism is defined, as well as what it takes to be considered a patriot. Students examine the ways in which the existing roles of women at the time, the acts of resistance that some women engaged in against these constraints, and the changes that did begin to take place in the later years of the time period impacted the ability of women to be patriots.

This this inquiry highlights one of the essential standards of American History 1 in North Carolina:

**Essential Standard AH1.H.2:** Analyze key political, economic and social turning points in United States History using historical thinking.

Concepts: Turning Points, Historical Thinking, Cause and Effect

Note: This inquiry is expected to take three or four 50-minute class periods. The inquiry time frame could expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (e.g., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, featured sources, writing). Teachers are encouraged to adapt the inquiry to meet the needs and interests of their students. This inquiry lends itself to differentiation and modeling of historical thinking skills while assisting students in reading the variety of sources.

### Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question “Could women be patriots in Revolutionary America?” students work through a series of supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources in order to construct and argument with evidence while acknowledging competing perspectives.

## Staging the Compelling Question

In staging the compelling question, teachers should have their students examine the woodcarving and painting, during which students should record their observations about how the women in these pieces are being portrayed. Teachers could use these resources to facilitate a discussion about how women were viewed by the larger society during this time period, and how those views might have been problematic.

## Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question— What is patriotism? – gives students the opportunity to reflect on what they already know about patriotism when coming into the inquiry. The first formative performance task asks students to record their initial understanding of the concept of patriotism and then, using the provided sources, establish a definition of patriotism within the colonial and Revolutionary period of United States history. Featured Source A, an Encyclopedia Britannica entry on patriotism, and Featured Source B, the introduction and section 1.1 of a Stanford Encyclopedia on Philosophy entry, help students establish a working definition of patriotism. Featured Source C, an article from the Library of Congress titled *Fanning the Flames of Patriotism*, provides insight into how colonial and Revolutionary Americans put their patriotism into practice, and what being patriotic meant to them.

## Supporting Question 2

The second supporting question— What rights and roles did women have during the colonial and revolutionary period? – allows students to establish where the rights and roles of women stood at the start of this time period. The second formative performance task asks students to make a comparative diagram that contrasts the roles of men and women during the colonial and Revolutionary periods. Featured Source A, a series of reflections by a Shaker woman named Ann Lee, and Featured Source B, a series of excerpts from letters written by Ester Edwards Burr, the daughter of revivalist preacher Jonathan Edwards, each provide a first-hand account of life for women in colonial and Revolutionary New England. Featured Source C, an encyclopedic entry from National Geographic titled *Women and Children in Colonial America*, provides a secondary-source view of the daily life of women and children during the colonial period. Featured Source D, Samuel Adams' *The Rights of Colonists*, provides a period-accurate outline of the rights of colonists more generally, though most of these rights were exclusive to white men.

## Supporting Question 3

The third supporting question— In what ways did women push back against their prescribed roles? – turns students' attention to the lives of women during the time period who were taking steps to redefine what it meant to be a woman. The third formative performance task asks students to work in groups to craft a short presentation on the life of one of these revolutionary women. The instructor should assign these groups and which source each group is expected to work with. Each of the Featured Sources is a short biography of one woman, all retrieved from the National Women's History Museum collection. Featured Source A highlights the life of Abigail Smith Adams, wife to John Adams. Featured Source B highlights the life of Judith Sargent Murray, an early advocate of women's rights, particularly to equality, education and financial independence. Featured Source C highlights the life of Mercy Otis Warren, a leading female intellectual and political playwright. Featured Source D highlights the life of Phillis Wheatley, a young woman purchased as a slave in Africa who was educated in the colonies and became the second woman to publish a book of poems. Featured Source E highlights the life of Mary Ludwig Hays, believed to be the real-life Molly Pitcher, a woman alleged to have helped save the Battle of Monmouth by bringing water to the troops and working the cannon after her husband was wounded.

## Supporting Question 4

The fourth supporting question— Why, and in what ways, did the role of women in America begin to change? – asks students to take what they have learned about where women’s rights stood and how women were resisting the constraints set before them, and examine how these efforts led to real change. The fourth formative performance task asks students to annotate the provided sources and engage in a large-group discussion of the changes women saw to their rights and roles during the later portions of this time period. Featured Source A, Shannon Bauchett’s *The Origins of Republican Womanhood*, summarizes the argument of Linda K. Kerber’s *Women of the Republic*, the preeminent piece on the political and social positions of women during the early years of the American republic, providing students with the earliest and most renowned research on the topic. Featured Source B, Linda K. Kerber’s *The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment – An American Perspective*, relates the changes which American women were seeing to their rights and roles to the changes their European peers were experiencing because of the Enlightenment.

## Summative Performance Task

At this point in the inquiry, students have examined the concept of patriotism, the roles and rights of women in colonial and Revolutionary America, how women resisted the constraints placed on them, and how their efforts led to lasting change of their stations in life. Students should be expected to demonstrate the breadth of their understandings and their abilities to use evidence from multiple sources to support their claims. In this task, students construct an evidence-based argument responding to the compelling question, “Could women be patriots in Revolutionary America?” It is important to note that students’ arguments could take a variety of forms, including a detailed outline, poster, or essay.

Students’ arguments will likely vary, but could include any of the following:

- Yes, women could be patriots because they were doing their part to help their country.
- No, women could not be patriots because they were not on the battlefield fighting for their country.
- Women were not allowed to fulfill the definition of patriot because of the political and social constraints placed on them.

Students could extend their study by examining who is excluded from the narratives, and why these exclusions are significant. Using their argument as a foundation, students could craft a two-minute, elevator-pitch style presentation on one group of people who were left out of our discussion and why their exclusion is significant. They could then present these pitches to the class.

Students have the opportunity to Take Informed Action by learning about women’s roles in another period of history and contrasting them with those of Revolutionary-era women. They demonstrate that they *understand* by exploring resources about the role of women during World War II. They show their ability to *access* by using the knowledge gathered in the inquiry and through the sources they just examined to access how the roles of women during these eras were different and how the actions of colonial women may have impacted the roles of women during WWII. And they *act* by creating a WWII-style propaganda poster that could have been used to activate women during the Revolutionary War.